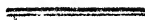


ESCAPED FROM THE FOREST.



A ROMANCE.



LANE, MINERVA-PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET.

THE
FUGITIVE
OF THE
FOREST.

A ROMANCE.

IN TWO VOLUMES

BY
MARIA LAVINIA SMITH.

VOL. I.

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FUGITIVE
OF THE
F O R E S T.



CHAP. I.

A sea of melting pearl, which some call tears,
She tendered ;
With them, upon her knees, her humble self,
Wringing her hands, whose whiteness so became them,
As if but now they waxed pale for woe.

SHAKESPEARE.



TOWARDS the close of a beautiful evening, in the autumn of 1343, as Count Isenburgh, with his friend Sigismund Mansfeldt, were returning from a ride through an extensive forest near

Colditz, their attention was suddenly arrested by the appearance of a very young and beautiful female figure, in visible agitation, and at a short distance.

At the same instant, uttering an exclamation of surprise, they instinctively hurried towards the spot; but, before they could address the object that attracted them, she, in the most emphatic manner, intreated their protection.

“ I am (added she) the most forlorn, and unfortunate creature in existence! bereft of my only friend, and even ignorant where I now am, and whither my steps carry me. I have travelled in this frightful wood since

eight o'clock in the morning; and, though happily escaping danger, have been tortured by every terrific fear that can shock the imagination! my strength now fails; if you refuse me succour and protection, I must inevitably die."

"You may command our services, (eagerly interrupted Sigismund,) speak but your wishes: you appear sinking with fatigue; allow me to place you on my horse, and I will conduct you to the place of your destination, however distant!"

"My castle is scarce a league from hence. (cried Isenburgh,) let us, for the present, at any rate, hasten thither."

"Oh! let me conjure you to con-

duct me to Leipzig!" (replied the stranger:) "Impossible! (returned Isenburgh) Leipzig is above six leagues from this place. It would be madness to attempt to reach it to night! Be assured you are with those upon whose honour you may rely, and who will protect you from all danger. Be advised then, and accept the shelter of my castle."

Further entreaty was unnecessary; the young stranger had fallen, to appearance lifeless, upon the arm of Sigismund, just as Isenburgh ceased speaking.

Mutually alarmed, they consulted for a few minutes in what manner they should act. Isenburgh strongly

urged hastening immediately to his castle; but Sigismund trembled, lest carrying her a league, in a state of insensibility, might produce fatal consequences; when Isenburgh fortunately perceived a stream at a very short distance, to which he instantly hurried, and bringing some water in his cap, plentifully sprinkled the face of the stranger, who, in a short time, gave signs of returning life, which was joyfully perceived by Isenburgh and Sigismund; and, placing her upon the horse of the latter, they hastily took the road to the castle.

Upon their arrival, Isenburgh summoned the principal of his female domestics, and, to their charge giving the yet half-fainting stranger, repaired, with

Sigismund to the library, where he became the sole subject of their discourse and wonder.





CHAP. II.

———The friendships of the world are oft
Confederacies in vice, or leagues of pleasure.

ADDISON.



COUNT Ifenburgh was just nineteen years old, of distinguished birth, and large fortune, perfectly handsome, and genteel; and uncontrouled master of his actions.

Left an orphan in early infancy, and placed under the guardianship of a gen-

tleman of extreme good nature, but moderate abilities, who, while he loved him as an engaging child, revered him as his superior. Young Isenburgh grew daily more arrogant, presuming, and self-willed; and the good dispositions with which nature had endowed him, were blasted by excessive and perpetual indulgence.

Yet, to a superficial observer, Isenburgh still was amiable and attractive; perfectly well educated as to exterior manners, and naturally good-tempered: he was often agreeable society; nor had fortune's favors and flattery spoiled him beyond retrieval.

But his temper was violent; and the smallest shadow of contradiction ex-

asperated him to the utmost extreme of passion.

His acquaintance with Sigismund commenced at Leipzig, where they had each received their education; and, though of very opposite dispositions, a degree of intimacy had succeeded.

Mild, amiable and sincere, Sigismund attracted universal regard; his reason was beyond his age, and he possessed very superior talents.

Baron Mansfeldt, his father, though fond of his son, of whom the most careless parent might have been proud, not unfrequently treated him with austerity, and generally with coldness.

The Baronefs, (who was one of the most amiable of women,) though repining at this conduct, could not reverse it: and, though idolizing Sigismund with the extreme warmth of maternal affection, was unable to procure him the indulgencies her ardent tenderness desired.

The Baron was penurious, though wealthy; and to the friendship of Henburgh, Sigismund was often indebted, for being extricated from many embarrassments into which he was involved through the parsimonious spirit of his father.

Attached both by nature and gratitude to his mother, who had, ever performed, in the fullest extent, the

important duties of that character; Sigismund was chiefly at the castle where she resided, and it was merely to oblige Isenburgh that he had consented to pass the shooting season with him at his estate near Colditz, where they had only arrived three days when the adventure occurred mentioned in the last chapter.





CHAP. III.

The bloom of op'ning flowers, unsullied beauty,
Softness, and sweetest innocence she wears, . .
And looks like nature in the world's first spring.

ROWE.



THE following morning Isenburgh had the pleasure to hear from his servants, that the stranger seemed infinitely more composed; and had sent a request, to see both himself and Sigismund, for a few minutes.

Both gentlemen eagerly obeyed the summons, and hastened to the apartment in which was the lady, whom, if they had thought beautiful the preceding evening, when overpowered with terror and fatigue, they now thought angelic !

She appeared scarce fifteen, slender, and elegantly formed; and the harmony of her features, and inimitably turned countenance, were rendered yet more fascinating by the uncommon brilliancy of her complexion.

Her dark brown hair, which was redundantly luxuriant, was braided round her head in the Grecian manner: her dress was a loose drapery of white muslin; and from a gold chain that

hung round her neck, was suspended a large enamelled heart, richly set round with diamonds.

Upon the entrance of Isenburgh and Sigismund, she rose hastily from her seat, and advancing towards them, energetically exclaimed :

“ My generous preservers! in what words can I express my gratitude and thanks! from what imminent perils have you saved me!—oh, gracious heaven! I yet shudder at the dangers I have escaped! language is too weak, and my heart too full, to allow me speech to express my feelings; but, may that same Power which, in pity to my distress, sent you to my aid, shower eternal blessings upon you!”

“ You value the trifling service we were so happy as to shew you too highly, (replied Isenburgh.) To have relieved your distress, I shall ever consider as the most valued moment of my existence! May I flatter myself, that, in future, you will condescend to look upon me as your most zealous friend; and, happily one, who has the ability, as well as the will, to serve you.”

“ Alas, (answered the lady, bursting into tears,) it is impossible for any mortal to befriend me! my sorrows cannot be alleviated!”

“ Might we but ask to be made acquainted with those afflictions, (cried Sigismund,) we might be able, at any rate, to soften them.”

“ I ought not to have any reserves with such generous friends as I have found you, gentlemen ; (returned the lady,) nor is it necessary. My name is Estella, but who, and what my parents are, I am totally ignorant. As long as I can recollect, I have lived in a small cottage, situated in a very retired part of the forest in which you found me, and concealed from common observation by thick and lofty trees.

“ Madame Veldentz, the only person who lived with me, called herself my governess ; and, to my frequent enquiries of who I was, and if I might ever hope to see my parents ? always replied, that she was bound by the most solemn oaths, never to divulge the secret ; but that the day would,

perhaps, arrive, when I should know my family history; and that, in the mean time, I must attend unceasingly to the instructions she bestowed, as if the time should ever come that I should be introduced into the world, it would be necessary that I should be accomplished and well-informed; and if I remained in solitude, my acquirements would be a never-failing resource against weariness.

“ To the extent of my abilities, I profited by her instructions; and the custom of learning grew habitually so pleasing to me, that though we generally rose at six o'clock, music, drawing, reading and needle-work, (occasionally diversifying the time with walks near to our little dwelling,) so

engrossed me, that the day generally seemed too short for our avocations.

“ Madame Veldentz, who was an excellent manager, contrived, by keeping poultry, and cultivating our little garden, to have so few wants, that there was seldom occasion for her visiting Colditz; but sometimes that step was necessary, and her custom was then to go with the first dawn of morning, and leave me in our cottage, which she carefully locked and padlocked. Often did I fruitlessly urge her to permit me to accompany her. She was always deaf to my intreaties till about two months ago, when I attained my fifteenth year; then, overpowered by my repeated solicitations,

she consented that I should attend her the following morning. What was my delight at obtaining this permission! I had never seen any habitation but our own, nor any human being but Madame Veldentz, (a few working people excepted, who I but rarely had seen in the forest;) but I had read wonderful accounts of towns, cities, and mankind in general; and my heart fluttered with expectation and delight at the wonders I should behold!

“ Madame Veldentz, even when the morning arrived, seemed reluctant that I should accompany her; but my intreaties were too powerful for her good-nature to withstand; and enveloping me in a thick veil, we left our cottage, and took the road to Colditz.

“ We had scarce proceeded half a league, when a man, wrapped up in a large great coat, suddenly overtook us; and, making a full stop, earnestly surveyed us. The countenance of Madame Veldentz suddenly became overclouded, but whispering to me to keep my veil carefully over my face, we continued to walk on a few hundred yards, when my governess, protesting she was seized with a violent cramp, insisted upon returning; and, though mortified at my disappointment, I could no longer oppose her resolution.

“ Upon our arrival at our cottage, Madame Veldentz seemed gloomy and unhappy; and when I expressed my chagrin at the failure of my wishes in the morning, pettishly chid me;

and, upon my adding, that I hoped the next time she visited Colditz, I should be more fortunate, she harshly declared, no persuasions should again induce her to allow me to bear her company.

“ Though vexed at this declaration. I did not dare repine ; but flattered myself time might relax what I thought the severity of my governess.

“ A few mornings after this adventure, whilst walking in our little garden alone, I perceived, at a very short distance, the same man who had met us in the forest.

“ Alarmed at his appearance, though from what cause, I could not assign,

I hurried in doors, and hastening to Madame Veldentz, informed her of his appearance.

“ Madame Veldentz turned pale at my information, and seemed for some minutes deliberating how to act; then turning to me, she said sternly ;

“ Estella, it is necessary I should speak with this person who has thus alarmed you ; but observe, remain in this chamber till my return.

“ So saying, she hastily quitted me ; and I heard her, after closing the door, carefully lock it.

“ Surprised at a conduct for which I could by no means account, I ran

eagerly to the window, hoping from thence to be able to observe her conduct to the stranger.

“ I was not disappointed ; I saw Madame Veldentz walk briskly to the spot where stood the unknown, who, upon seeing her, hastened instantly towards her : he seized her hand ; she did not remove it, and their conversation seemed equally interesting.

“ At length they sat down upon the body of a tree that lay upon the ground adjacent ; and, for above three hours, seemed absorbed in an interesting conversation.

“ At last they arose, and, seeming to bid each other farewell, the unknown

immersed deeper into the wood, and Madame Veldentz returned to our cottage.

“ During that whole day, she seemed full of reflection, and to my repeated interrogations, respecting the strange gentleman, replied, that the time would come when I should know every thing, but that for the present I must forbear curiosity.

“ Just as I had taken leave of her for the night, and was preparing to go to bed, she suddenly informed me, she must visit Colditz on the next day, but forbade me, on pain of her displeasure, to ask to accompany her.

“ I obeyed, though reluctantly, and went to bed; but sleep was a stranger

to my eye lids; the mysterious conduct of my governess, the unaccountable appearance of the stranger, altogether bewildered my ideas, and I passed the whole night in a sea of wonder and doubt, and arose in the morning, with even increased alarm and apprehension.

“ In spite of my endeavours to conquer the notion, I could not persuade myself but that Madame Veldentz was going to quit me for ever; and the idea was so fixed upon me, that I actually acquainted her with my suspicions, and clinging to her, as she rose to depart, besought her for pity’s sake not to abandon me !

“ Madame Veldentz seemed really shocked at my concern ; yet, half chiding, half soothing, in some part relieved my fears, and endeavoured to convince me of their fallacy.

“ But when at the expiration of half an hour she arose, to depart, my terrors returned with additional violence, nor could I be pacified, till she faithfully promised to relinquish the idea of visiting Colditz that day,

“ Satisfied at having obtained this promise, I commenced my customary employments, and when night came, tenderly carried Madame Veldentz, thanked her for having humoured my weakness, and promised, never again to act so unreasonably.

“ Indeed, in that very short space of time, my fears had lulled to rest, and I blushed at having for a moment indulged them.

“ My governess seemed much affected by my behaviour ; her tears flowed, and her agitation was excessive.

“ At last, after bidding me a tender adieu, and making me swallow a cordial, which she said would be serviceable, she retired.

“ The following morning I slept longer than usual, in consequence, I imagined, of the medicine I had taken the preceding night.

“ I rose and hastened to the room where we usually breakfasted, in full expectation of seeing Madame Veldentz, but the room seemed desolate and forsaken ; I again returned up stairs, and called upon the name of my governess repeatedly, but was still unsuccessful. Half frightened, I hastened to the garden door, thinking it might be probable she was walking in the garden ; alas, my fears then increased to an alarming degree ; I perceived the key removed, and that the door was fast locked from the outside !

“ Convinced that Madame Veldentz had put her scheme in execution of going to Colditz, all my succeeding fears rushed into my imagination, I

returned to the parlour quite disconsolate, till by chance a letter directed for me, in the hand of my governess, caught my attention; I seized it eagerly, and this was the distressing epistle."

So saying, Estella put a final note into Sigismund's hand, who read as follows:

" *TO ESTELLA.*

" Peculiar circumstances constrain me to act in a manner insupportably distressing to my feelings! my dear Estella, I must leave you! you but too prophetically divined my desire for visiting Colditz this day! yes, my child, we must for the present separate; but I do not leave you friendless.

“ I have arranged a scheme for your future life, which I hope will be productive of ease and comfort.

“ The Abbess of the Convent of St. Clare, is my relation ; I have written to her this day concerning you ; she will fetch you from hence tomorrow morning, may she arrive in time to deliver you this letter and teach you resignation to its contents !

“ It is not now in my power to unravel the mystery of your birth, or disclose the reasons of my sudden desertion !

“ Never omit to wear your heart and chain ; respect, and love the Abbess of St. Clare, and endeavour to conciliate her affection ; she is already disposed to

love you, and the unalterable sweetness of disposition you possess, will soon ripen that inclination into a real friendship!

“ And now farewell, dearest Estella! I must not attempt to describe my feelings at this cruel necessity of leaving you; you know my tenderness and affection, and must believe the step deeply lacerates my bosom; and that the effort proceeds from *duty*, untainted by caprice! I dare not trust myself with another interview.

“ May Heaven preserve you!

“ AGATHA VELDENTZ.”

“ Judge what were my sensations after perusing that cruel billet! (cried Estella, as Sigismund ceased reading)

my tears and lamentations, though conscious they were unavailing, were unceasing! till at length the idea struck me, that by hastening to Leipzig, I might yet be able to overtake Madame Veldentz, and by intreaty prevail upon her not to abandon me. The thought of being placed at the Convent of St. Clare was insupportable; and I determined at all hazards to escape from our little dwelling, that the Abbess, who I supposed would very shortly arrive, might find her journey fruitless.

“ The apprehension that I should scarce have sufficient time to effect my scheme, accelerated my motions, and by the help of table cloths fixed to the window, I escaped; and immersing

into the forest, eagerly sought the road to Leipzig; but alas, ignorant of the different paths, I seemed every minute further from the spot I sought; and tired and fatigued with being so many hours walking, without taking the least sustenance, I should certainly have died with fatigue, had not your generous kindness, gentlemen, relieved me!"

When Estella ceased speaking, both Isenburgh and Sigismund made her many acknowledgments for the confidence she had shewn them, and repeated their offers of service.

Estella thanked them with the greatest sweetness, but said she had already been sufficiently troublesome;

that her only wish was to find Madame Veldentz, and that by going to Leipzig she did not doubt but that she should obtain her desire, as she could not but imagine her governess would remain there, till she should hear whether the Abbess of St. Clare had conveyed her to the Convent.

“ Surely (cried Sigismund) you cannot seriously wish to embark again in those troubles from which you so severely suffered yesterday! Pardon me, but though the conduct of Madame Veldentz is mysterious, yet it is very discernable, that she, from reflection, abandons you ; and that, consequently, she will take every step to avoid you ; indeed it is most probable she has quitted this part of the country.”

“ Alas, (cried Estella) I must not remain here.”

“ Why not? (interrupted Isenburgh eagerly), you are with those who, to the last moment of existence, will protect you; and in a spot where your smallest wishes shall be laws. Deign, then, charming Estella, to remain in a castle where you are sovereign, and relinquish the chimerical notion of seeking a woman, who must be unworthy of your tenderneſs, ſince ſhe can reſolve to abandon you.”

Estella ſeemed much averſe to this arrangement: Isenburgh made uſe of every argument to perſuade her, and Sigismund alſo pleaded powerfully; yet their arguments were of no avail;

and, though contrary to the opinion and wishes of both the gentlemen, they were obliged to coincide with her intention of going to Leipzig the following day, stipulating, however, that they should be permitted to accompany her.

Shortly after this point was settled, Estella complained of a violent pain in her head, and seeming desirous of being left alone, Isenburgh and Sigismund withdrew.





CHAP. IV.

————— In one short hour
Already am I gone an age of *passion* !

DRYDEN.



UPON quitting the apartment of Estella, Isenburgh and Sigismund repaired* to the garden, and for some time they each seemed plunged in thought.

At length Isenburgh, breaking silence, exclaimed :

“ I never could have supposed such a young creature as Estella could have been so inflexible ! with what firmness she resisted our joint endeavours to persuade her to remain here ! ”

“ She has, doubtless, received a good education from that mysterious Madame Veldentz, (returned Sigismund,) she seems so well acquainted with the rules of propriety.”

“ She is the most angelic creature I ever beheld, (answered Isenburgh ;) but Madame Veldentz might have employed herself more to the purpose

than in filling her little head with prudish notions."

"She is truly fascinating, (replied Sigismund,) and I think that fear of deviating from propriety renders her yet more so; (for what female can be amiable who is not governed by those dictates!) I must confess, that the conduct of Estella, in determining, at all hazards, to seek her governess, interests me more forcibly than ever in her behalf."

Isenburgh turned his head on one side to conceal a satyrical smile which escaped him at the last words of Sigismund, and the conversation took a different turn.

Shortly after they had dined, Isenburgh, with Sigismund, proposed again visiting Estella, when a servant entered to say, that the young lady was alarmingly indisposed. Shocked at this intelligence, they instantly hurried to her chamber, and found her reclining upon a sofa, with every symptom of a high fever.

Isenburgh instantly dispatched a domestic for medical advice, and enforced particular orders to his female servants to shew every assistance to the invalid, who was soon after put to bed, and Sigismund and Isenburgh remained in an adjacent room, eagerly expecting the apothecary, who, upon arriving, and seeing Estella, pronounced

her illness to proceed from over-fatigue, and ordered her to be kept quiet.

During some days, Estella continued seriously ill; but a natural good constitution, aided by the assiduous attention she received, at the expiration of a fortnight, enabled her to quit her apartment; and, with returning health, her beauty seemed increased even to additional loveliness.

No sooner did health return to Estella, than she again expressed her hope of finding Madame Veldentz; and, with many expressions of gratitude for the favours she had received,

signified her intention of quitting the castle, and repairing to Leipzig.

Isenburgh, (who already began to feel for Estella, what he denominated a violent passion), strongly opposed this intention; and, finding all his arguments ineffectual, called upon Sigismund to second his intreaties.

Sigismund, however, to his surprise and vexation, professed his opinion, in many respects, to concur with Estella's; and proposed, that, at any rate, she should remain at the convent of St. Clare, while enquiries were made after Madame Veldentz.

In vain did Isenburgh remind Estella of the repugnance she had

expressed, when reciting her history, to the idea of residing in St. Clare convent, and that it was to avoid that she fled! Estella was immovable; and it was at last agreed, that Sigismund should carry a letter from her that night to the abbess, informing her what had happened since the departure of Madame Veldentz, and intreating to be received into the convent.

Sigismund, therefore, shortly afterwards, rode to the convent of St. Clare, and delivered Estella's letter to the lady abbess; but what was his surprize and vexation, to find her resolutely bent upon denying admittance to poor Estella.

The story of her illness she treated as a fable, invented to endeavour to palliate her fault, in remaining so long in the mansion of a young and gay man; and enumerating the mischiefs and injury it would do to the convent, to introduce a young person, whose character, at best, was equivocal, she positively refused even to see the object of her displeasure.

To the enquiries of Sigismund after Madame Veldentz, she declared her total ignorance concerning the motives of her flight, and refused to satisfy his curiosity in any particular whatever.

Finding all attempts to persuade the abbess to admit Estella into the

corvent ineffectual, Sigismund withdrew, and returned to the castle of Isenburgh, much chagrined at the failure of his embassy.

Upon enquiring for Isenburgh, Sigismund learned that a party of gentlemen had called, and that he had gone with them riding: not sorry that he had an opportunity to converse with Estella alone, he hastily flew to her apartment, and found her most eagerly expecting him.

Though it was with the utmost caution he acquainted her with the abbess's resolution not to receive her, and omitted the reflexion she had thrown upon her for becoming a guest in Isenburgh's castle, Estella was

overwhelmed with grief at the information. Sigismund had felt a growing affection for Estella even from the first moment he had beheld her; and the sight of her distress increased his love with his commiseration. Unable to repress his feelings, he avowed the affection with which she had inspired him; and the manner in which she heard his declaration, convinced him he was not disagreeable. Their conversation became interesting; Estella expressed a hope that he would advise her how to act; at the same time saying, it was impossible for her to remain at Isenburgh's castle.

Sigismund heard that declaration with rapture; and, actuated more by love than discretion, entreated Estella

to accept his hand, and, by that means, give him a natural right to protect her.

Estrella heard this offer with much confusion, intermingled with gratitude. At length, recovering from her embarrassment, she said, "she was confident his family would never consent to his espousing a poor friendless girl, destitute in every respect as she was; and that honour would not permit her to take advantage of the partiality with which he honoured her, to his own detriment."

Though the mention of his family reminded Sigismund of the austerity of his father, and of the little probability that he would ever consent to

his union with Estella; he yet continued to urge his request, when the sudden entrance of Ifenburgh broke off their discourse.

Ifenburgh appeared gloomy and discontented: Sigismund felt chagrined at his sudden intrusion; and Estella seemed lost in reflection. The conversation was therefore spiritless, and ill supported on all sides; and, as soon as she possibly could, Estella withdrew for the night. After she had quitted the apartment, Sigismund related to Ifenburgh the conversation he had with the abbess of St. Clare.

Ifenburgh listened to the particulars with avidity, and it was evident to Sigismund, that the refusal of the

abbess to receive Estella into the convent, gave him inward satisfaction. From many things that fell from Isenburgh during their conversation, it was very apparent that he was in love with Estella. Sigismund had suspected it to be the case shortly after she had been brought to the castle; but Isenburgh's manner that night rendered the matter not to be doubted.

Anxious to form a plan which might enable him to convey Estella from the castle with all possible dispatch, Sigismund passed the whole night, after retiring to his chamber, in traversing the room, and creating new schemes in his imagination. To propose to marry her openly, was what he did not dare to do, being wholly dependant upon

his father, (of whom he stood in great fear,) and scarce twenty years old. At length he resolved to send a note to Estella early in the morning, requesting she would meet him for half an hour in the park, that he might have an opportunity of finishing the conversation which Isenburgh had interrupted the preceding evening.





CHAP. V.

If you think I am too quickly won,
I'll frown and be perverse, and say thee nay,
So thou wilt woo; but else, not for the world.
In truth, fair Sigismund, I am too fond;
And therefore thou mayest think my behaviour light,
But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.

SHAKESPEARE.



UPON receiving Sigismund's billet,
Estella was greatly divided how to act,
her inclination strongly prompted her

to meet him in the park, according to his request, but the apprehension that by so doing she might render herself liable to censure, staggered her determination.

She already felt a growing attachment to Sigismund and an unconquerable dislike to Isenburgh, notwithstanding the marked attention and unbounded complaisance of the latter.

Yet though she resolved never to form a clandestine union with Sigismund, she yet thought that the most rigorous judge could not condemn her for endeavouring to secure the friendship of a young man so apparently amiable, in her forlorn situation.

The latter reflection gaining strength upon her mind, she determined to meet him, and, softly quitting her chamber, she with trembling steps entered the park.

It was scarcely eight o'clock in the morning. Isenburgh, who never breakfasted till a late hour, was not risen; but Sigismund had been in the park for a considerable time, and had nearly relinquished the hopes of seeing Estella, when she appeared walking down the avenue that led from the house. He eagerly sprang towards her, and expressed, in the liveliest manner, his rapture at beholding her, and the obligation she conferred in affording him an opportunity of discoursing with her alone; and renewed

the arguments he had made use of the preceding evening, to induce her to quit the castle of Isenburgh, and receive his faith at the altar.

Estella, though she would not attempt to conceal the preference she entertained for him, yet strongly refused her assent to his proposal.

“ Our acquaintance has been too short, (added she,) for you to be enabled to judge of my disposition and character sufficiently to ascertain if I am calculated to make you happy, even if I was upon an equality with you in birth and fortune. And can you imagine, that ignorant, like of the authors of my being, and their rank in society, I could take advan-

tage of your generosity and affection, to induce you to form an alliance with one who is, most probably, much beneath you?"

" Oh, stop, for heaven's sake, my dearest Estella! (interrupted Sigismund,) can you suppose me so sordid and mean as to regard such trifling considerations? Do more justice to my affection, and be assured that no circumstances could change that regard which is fixed solely upon yourself."

" Ah, (cried Estella,) though such may be your generous sentiments, yet remember you have parents and friends, who, doubtless, expect you to form a brilliant connection."

" 'Tis true, (answered Sigismund,) I have not much hope that my father would at present consent to our union; but, would you but agree to a private marriage, my mother, (who is one of the most amiable women in existence) should be entrusted with the secret, and, through her intercession, my father would, in a short time, I am not, be induced to forgive what could not be undone."

" Indeed, Sigismund, (replied Estrella,) I would not, upon any consideration, be accessory to your committing such an act of disobedience. Filial duty, in every state of life, ought to be implicit; do not, therefore, urge me to go to do to oblige you

inevitably to break what I consider as one of the first duties: but allow me to bespeak your friendship and assistance upon another subject: I shall not be happy till I have quitted this castle. Since by my indiscretion I have forfeited the introduction of Madame Veldentz to the convent of St. Clare, may I solicit you to endeavour to procure me a situation in any other convent that is adjacent. I have a small sum of money, (continued she, taking a little silver purse from her pocket,) which I conclude Madame Veldentz placed in my pocket whilst I was asleep the night preceding her cruel departure; and this I hope will be sufficient to defray my expences for the present."

" I will go this morning to Leipzig, to the convent of St. Agnes, (cried Sigismund eagerly ;) a relation of mine was educated there ; and, as the abbess is personally acquainted with me, I think it is most probable that I shall there be able to procure for you the situation you desire : and, when you shall be settled agreeably to your wishes, I will, if you will permit, make your history known to my mother, who, I am assured, will be most happy to afford you protection."

" My generous friend, (cried Estella,) to be known to your mother, and to gain her protection, would, to me, be a happiness that language is too weak to express !"

"And may I hope, (added Sigismund,) that you will authorize the sentiments that I have ventured to declare?"

Estella blushed, and looked timidly upon Sigismund; she said nothing, but her silence was expressive: and Sigismund, whilst he pressed her hand to his lips, felt his heart delight with transport, assured that the object of his love felt a reciprocal affection.





CHAP. VI.

Ma, chi di paventare in alta impresa,
 S'avvien, circonvallato, e che non puote
 Amor, che non catena il cielo unisce.

Radio.



AFTER quitting Estella, Sigismund mounted his horse, and hastened to Leipzig. At the convent of St. Agnes, he found the abbess perfectly willing to receive Estella as a boarder. He ventured to describe her as his own

cousin, thinking, that by saying she was related to such a respectable family as Mansfeldt, he should ensure her being regarded with respect.

After settling the necessary preliminaries respecting the admittance of Estella to the convent, Sigismund took leave of the abbess, delighted that he had obtained a situation for her, which would remove her from Isenburgh, whose attentions he began to view with the eyes of jealousy.

Upon arriving at the castle, Sigismund found Isenburgh in the apartment of Estella, in earnest conversation, and visibly much interested in the subject of his discourse.

Estella no sooner perceived Sigismund, than, turning towards him, she exclaimed:

“ My best friend! have you been successful? is there yet an asylum left me?”

“ At the convent of St. Agnes, (answered Sigismund,) I have procured for you the temporary residence you require: the abbess is willing to receive you, whenever you are desirous of putting yourself under her protection.”

“ Then I will go from hence to-morrow, (returned Estella;) how much am I indebted to you for procuring

me such a respectable situation!" "And, no doubt, (interrupted Isenburgh, who had sat in sullen silence from the entrance of Sigismund,) no doubt you are more indebted to him for enabling you to quit these hated walls, and to act without the advice and assistance of one, who, though most anxious to serve you, has yet inspired you with the most invincible dislike!"

"Oh, heavens! Count Isenburgh, (replied Estella,) can you really suppose me so superlatively ungrateful? Do me more justice, and, be assured I can never forget the favours you have bestowed upon me; but, it would be totally inconsistent with propriety, to remain in your castle, for obvious

reasons ; and, when I found in our last conversation upon this subject, that the generosity of your disposition rendered you averse to my seeking any other asylum, was it not natural I should accept the services of your friend, who, happily, entertained the same opinions as myself?"

Isenburgh sighed, and was a few minutes without reply, at length he cried ;

" But, Estella, promise me you will not leave us tomorrow. Surely such a trifling request you may grant without breaking through those fastidious rules of which you seem to stand in such awe."

“ I cannot comply, (answered Estella;) I am resolved to go to the convent early tomorrow morning.”

“ With Sigismund for your guide?” (enquired Isenburgh sarcastically). “ Most assuredly, (interrupted Sigismund hastily;) after my conversation with the abbess this morning, it will be absolutely proper I should place Estella under her protection.”

Estella was embarrassed, and, turning to Isenburgh, she seemed preparing to address him, when darting an angry look he cried, “ Though I have not the honour of your confidence, though it is not me you select for

the companion of your morning walks, you shall, notwithstanding, find me a friend. In spite of yourself, I will be serviceable to you; and when you shall have proved the sincerity of my disinterested esteem, you will, perhaps, arraign yourself of ill-founded prejudice in your unjust and cruel aversion!"

With these words, Isenburgh abruptly quitted the room; and, hastening to his own, gave himself up to the contending passions of love, rage and jealousy.

The passion he entertained for Estella had daily gained increasing strength; and nothing had prevented him from

avowing it to her, but the presence of Sigismund.

In him, he beheld, not only a rival, but a censor, whom he dreaded; conscious that his own intentions would not bear the scrutiny of a man of honour.

He had observed a softness in the manner of Estella towards Sigismund; and the tenor of her conduct shewed a preference towards him, that filled the bosom of Isenburgh with resentment and jealous rage. The pleasure he used to feel in Sigismund's company was gone, dislike succeeded, and he eagerly wished the time to arrive when he should return to Mansfeldt. To anticipate that event, he deter-

mined to cause an anonymous letter to be written to Baron Mansfeldt, informing him, that his son had formed a dangerous connexion with an artful woman of intrigue, who was using every endeavour to seduce him into a clandestine marriage, and would most probably succeed, did not parental influence interfere, and summons him back to Mansfeldt."

When Sigismund should be removed, Iseburgh had no doubt but that his own plans would succeed. Marriage with Estella had never entered his ideas; though aware of the purity of Sigismund's sentiments, he had cautiously concealed his own from his observation; and, apprehensive of engendering suspicions in the breast of

his friend, had repressed every mark of particular attention in his presence.

The intended removal of Estella to the convent of St. Agnes, angered, and disappointed him; and he determined to leave no stratagem untried to get her again into his power.





CHAP. VII.

—— Well, do not swear, altho' I joy in thee,
I have no joy of this contract to night;
It is too rash, too unadvis'd, too sudden,
Too like the lightning which does cease to be
Ere one can say it lightens.



THE following morning a servant delivered a sealed billet to Estella; and at the same time informed her, that Count Isenburgh had quitted the castle at six o'clock that morning, but

had left orders that his equipage should be ready at what hour she pleased, to carry her according to her directions.

She opened the note, and read as follows :

“ TO ESTELLA.

“ I leave you, Estella, with the hope of being able to render you a signal service : what my design is, I will not now unfold ; nor shall you again see me, unless I am able to effect that, which, if it promotes your felicity, may, in a mind like yours, induce you, in future, to think favourably on

“ ISENBURGH.”

Estella shewed the note she had received to Sigismund, immediately upon his entering the apartment. The mysterious file in which it was written, occasioned them mutual surprize, nor could they form an idea of the design to which he alluded, unless he had formed the romantic notion of discovering the spot where Madame Veldentz had secreted herself.

After some time spent in useless conjecture, Estella expressed her wish to depart for the convent, and bidding farewell to the castle of Isenburgh, set out for Leipzig, accompanied by Sigismund, and attended by several domestics belonging to Isenburgh.

After introducing her to the abbess as his cousin, and entreating her particular attention, Sigismund besought Estella to give him five minutes conversation alone in the parlour, when, throwing himself at her feet, he exclaimed:

“ In complying with your wishes, and placing you at this convent, think, Estella, of the happiness of which I deprive myself, accustomed for this last happy month to the extatic bliss of your society! how shall I exist, deprived of such felicity! Notwithstanding the sudden departure of Isenburgh, I mean to remain at his castle for some time, (most probably till his return;) promise me, then, dearest

Estella, that you will allow me to see you every day. The relationship that the abbess believes to exist between us, will authorise that step; and, in time, may I venture to hope, you will give me a real and natural right to protect you?"

Estella would not attempt to conceal the pleasure she should derive from Sigismund's visits; and the trouble they each felt when the hour of parting arrived, was greatly softened by the reflection, that they should meet again on the following day.

During ten days, Sigismund regularly visited Estella at the convent; and, after each visit, found his love

and admiration increase; not a day passed but he discovered in her some new trait of sweetness of temper, good understanding, and a well-cultivated mind: hourly she became more dear to him, and hourly did his own influence become more powerful over her mind.

No intelligence arrived from Isenburgh; and his absence often gave rise to much astonishment, and many conjectures in the minds of Estella and Sigismund.

Upon returning to a late dinner at the castle, after having spent the morning with Estella, Sigismund was surprised and afflicted to find a letter from

his father, commanding his instant return home, without assigning any reason for the peremptory command.

Sigismund felt inconceivable reluctance to obey this mandate; but his father's orders were not to be disputed; he determined, therefore, to set off for Mansfeldt in two days; and in the mean while, to exert all his influence with Estella, to engage her to agree to a private marriage previous to his departure.

The following morning he repaired early to the convent of St. Agnes, and informing the abbess he had something of importance to communicate to Es-

tella from his father, was permitted to see her alone in the parlour.

The agitation of his manner immediately betrayed to Estella, that something more than usual had happened; and she gently inquired, if any news had reached him from Count Ifenburgh?

Sigismund instantly acquainted her with the real cause of his distress; and concluded, with conjuring her, in the strongest terms, to receive his faith at the altar. In vain did Estella repeat her determination never to accept his hand in a clandestine manner; in vain did she assure him of her conviction; that engagements formed

without the concurrence and sanction of friends, were ultimately unhappy. Sigismund's arguments seemed to derive fresh force from opposition; and, ~~feeling~~ taking her hand, he solemnly ~~swore~~ never to release it till she promised to unite herself to him previous to his departure for Mansfield.

“ Oh, Estella, (he added,) if you have no commiseration for my sufferings, at any rate have some pity for yourself. Call to mind your friendless, deserted state: yet recollect, that very state, though it ought to insure the good will and protection of the world, on the contrary, renders you more open to its malevolence! Circumstanced as we now are, the little services, that I

may have been so fortunate as to shew you, are liable to misrepresentation, and even to injure your reputation. Eager to see you, and to enjoy the rapturous delight of your conversation, I have seized every moment that could afford me that happiness, without reflecting, that the malice of the envious and wicked, might put the worst constructions upon our friendship. Let me, then, conjure you, dearest Estella, to receive my vows: I have prevailed upon a priest, upon whom I can depend, to perform the ceremony this evening. I shall become of age in fourteen months, till that period it will be very easy to conceal our marriage; you can remain at this convent in the same situation as at present; and, my

intimacy with Ifenburgh, will naturally account for my being frequently in this neighbourhood; or, I can remove you to a monastery in the neighbourhood of Mansfeldt, which ever is most agreeable to you. Speak, then, dearest Estella, and pronounce my doom; you know not to what fatal violence a rejection of my offers may drive me!"

Estella's tears fell fast during the whole of Sigismund's speech, in part convinced by his reasoning, and terrified at his vehemence. Her resolution gave way; and though she yet continued silent, Sigismund perceived, by her countenance, that his arguments would succeed; and, redoubling

his prayers and intreaties, he at length extorted a promise from the fearful Estella, to join her fate to his that evening.

After having procured this promise, Sigismund seemed to have attained the summit of all happiness. In proportion, however, as he grew animated and chearful, Estella became grave and dejected; but even that appearance could not damp the spirits of the delighted Sigismund.

After some time spent in arranging their future plans, it was agreed, that Estella should leave the convent that night, under pretence of visiting a friend newly arrived at Leipzig: that Sigismund should meet her at the walls

of the convent, and conduct her to the chapel, where the priest he had provided should be ready to unite them.





CHAP. VIII.

The priest in milk white vestments clad,
Perform'd the mystic rite;
Love, lit the hallow'd torch that led
To Hymen's chaste delight.

MYSS MANNAM MORE.



AT the appointed hour, Estella having signified to the abbess, that a particular friend desired to see her that night, quitted the convent; and, full of fear and apprehension, hastened to

the spot where Sigismund was anxiously expecting to meet her.

The delight he manifested at their approaching union, infused a short-lived pleasure in her bosom, but it was a transitory sensation; and as they approached the chapel, her agitation was too powerful to escape the observation of Sigismund.

“ Dearest Estella, (he cried,) banish those fears which are so inconceivably distressing. Is not the happy man you thus honour with your choice, sensible of the distinction you are ready to confer upon him? Are you not going to form the felicity of one who loves you to adoration? And shall you

not insure to yourself a sincere and faithful friend to whom your happiness is dearer than his own existence, and who can shelter you from those evils to which your unprotected innocence would expose you? Smile then, dear Estella, and let me hope, that this union, which renders me the happiest of mortals, does not increase the vexations of which you have to complain!"

"Dear Sigismund! (replied Estella,) the step I am about to take so fully bespeaks my unbounded affection, that all protestation on that subject, would be superfluous: but, have I not cause to be displeased with my own conduct? Ought I to give way to that love that renders me thus implicit to

your wishes? Ought I to consent to a marriage formed without the sanction of your parents? Am I not bringing unhappiness into a hitherto happy family, and rendering an obedient son refractory? Alas! I am but too sensible of the impropriety of my conduct, and surely that conviction heightens my fault! but my love for you, Sigismund, renders every other consideration puerile."

" Banish these ridiculous fears, my Estella! (cried Sigismund, eagerly interrupting her.) Pardon me, but they are devoid of all foundation: I shall take the earliest opportunity to inform my mother of our union; and, through her mediation, I have no doubt of obtaining my father's forgiveness, and

even approbation. Be re-assured, and think only of the happiness you are going to confer upon your faithful Sigismund !”

Their arrival at the chapel prevented further discourse.

The priest, with another person, were already in expectation of their appearance ; and Sigismund, leading his trembling bride to the altar, received those vows which he expected should render him the happiest of mankind.

As soon as the ceremony was performed, Sigismund, after liberally rewarding the priest and assistant, required them to take the most solemn

oaths of secrecy, which, after having received, he,* with Estella, quitted the chapel, and repaired to apartments not far distant; then taking Estella's hand, he cried,

“ My dearest Estella, to induce you to agree to our union, upon which the whole happiness of my life depended, I made light of my apprehensions respecting my father's displeasure! Pardon the deceit, which I should never have put in practice, but from the uncertainty, that, unless you was deceived in that particular, you never would consent to be mine. I will no longer conceal from you, that I am inconceivably alarmed, lest he should gain intelligence of this day's transaction, previous to my gaining my

one and twentieth year ; but it depends on you to remove my fears : give me but a solemn promise to conceal, even to deny, our marriage ; and the precautions I have taken, render it impossible for it to be discovered, till it suits me to disclose it."

Estella gently reproached Sigismund with having deceived her in such an important circumstance, but the promise of secrecy she most cheerfully gave ; and bound herself, in the most sacred manner, to conceal their marriage, till he should permit her to reveal it.

" But, indeed, Sigismund, (she continued,) you had no cause to suppose I should wish to divulge it ! to

whom, but to Madame Veldentz, could you think I should desire to entrust it? And, alas, I have no prospect of again seeing her! she is, doubtless, very far distant from Leipzig!"

"It was of Isenburgh, (answered Sigismund,) that I was apprehensive; he will, probably, return to his castle, before I am able to again quit Mansfeldt, (though I shall hasten to you with eager solicitude:) he will, then, doubtless, visit you at this convent; and, notwithstanding the friendship that once did, and the intimacy that still subsists between us, I have many reasons for withholding all confidence from him. Was it not that my return to Mansfeldt was so suddenly commanded by my father, I would have

sought a residence for you in a convent, some distance from hence; but that step is at present impossible: as to cause your removal from hence without the greatest secrecy and circumspection, would be at once hazarding the disclosure of what it is so necessary to conceal. I must carefully refrain from appearing much interested concerning you; and, however contrary to my wishes, allow you to remain at St. Agnes, till I can effect a scheme for removing you, without being, to appearance, concerned in your flight. If Isenburgh should return during my absence, see him but seldom, I entreat; and remember, always to speak of me with coolness and indifference. One reflection, that consoles me in some measure at being thus con-

strained to quit you, is, that you cannot be removed from St. Agnes against your inclination."





CHAP. IX.

O lady, weep no more, lest I give cause
To be suspected of more tenderneſs
Than doth become a man I will remain
The loyalſt huſband that did e'er plight troth.

SHAKESPEARE.



WHEN the hour fixed for Sigismund's departure approached, Lillia, who had till then, to the extent of her fortitude, reſſeſſed unavailing regrets, no longer could conceal her

grief. Her tears fell fast upon the shoulder of Sigismund, who, nearly as much afflicted as herself, attempted to alleviate her distress: in vain he bid her look forward to the happy days their re-union promised! in vain he assured her, that no absence could diminish his inviolable love! Estella seemed incapable of consolation; and the exclamation of, "Oh, Sigismund, we part to meet no more!" was the only sentence she could articulate. Her grief so entirely overcame Sigismund, that, when a servant entered to announce the horses being in waiting, he shrunk from the unwelcome tidings, and, after ordering the servant to depart, declared he could not quit Leipzig that day, but would rather hazard his father's displeasure, and the discovery even of

his marriage, than leave Estella in the distressing state into which the prospect of parting had thrown her.

However delighted Estella might feel for a few minutes at the rapturous idea of Sigismund's protracting his stay at Leipzig, a short time convinced her of the risk and impropriety of indulging present happiness, to the destruction of future felicity; and, assuming all the resolution she possessed, she entreated Sigismund to relinquish the idea her weakness had led him to adopt; and to persist in his original plan, and commence his journey to Mansfeldt castle that day.

“ Whenever the distressing moment should arrive, dearest Sigismund, (she

continued,) that should tear you from me, my sorrow would be as poignant as at this moment! nay, it would be aggravated by the reflection, that I had induced you to act in opposition to your better judgment, and even rendered a disclosure of our union to be apprehended! Pursue, then, your first intentions; quit Leipzig today; I will instantly return to St. Agnes, and soften the grief that overpowers my bosom, by reflecting on your vows of constancy and love; and in nourishing the sweet hope, that you will seize eagerly the first moment to return to your affectionate Estella."

After some time spent in tender argument upon this subject, Sigismund's wishes gave way to the reasoning of


Estella; and, with mutual vows of everlasting affection, they took a sorrowful farewell. Sigismund mounting his horse, rode slowly from the hotel; and Estella, with mournful steps, repaired to the convent of St. Agnes.





• CHAP. X.

Ber. s'ode il ragionor, si vede il volto,
Ma dentro il bello mal guidicar puffed.



THREE days after the departure of Sigismund, as Estella was sitting in an alcove belonging to the convent gardens, her thoughts solely fixed upon the dear husband of her affections, and anticipating the moment that should

bring her intelligence from him, she was suddenly informed, that a gentleman desired earnestly to speak with her in the parlour.

A momentary dawn of pleasure rushed over the mind of Estella, in the imagery, that Sigismund had probably returned; but two moments reflection convinced her of the fallacy of her hopes; and the idea that *Ifenburgh* was returned, and was the person then expecting her, overwhelmed her with chagrin. From Sigismund's manner in speaking of his friend, the least discerning might perceive his mind was tinctured with jealousy; to converse, therefore, in his absence, with *Ifenburgh*, was, to her, painful and distressing; yet, it was impossible she

could refuse to see one to whom she was under so many obligations; but to prevent the frequency of Isenburgh's visits, she determined to tell him, that the abbess strongly objected to her seeing gentlemen at the Convent, and that her situation was too precarious to admit of her acting contrary to the regulations of the house.

Upon entering the parlour where Isenburgh was sitting, in the Convent, the embarrassment of Estella was too powerful to permit her voice to welcome him. Her confusion was too evident to escape his penetrating eyes; but, appearing not to observe it, he expressed himself in general terms, happy to see her again, and to observe health so visible in her countenance;

at the same time apologizing for his hasty behaviour the last evening they had been together.

“ But (continued he) though I am very ready to admit my conduct, that night scarce merits forgiveness, I am presumptuous enough to hope that when you know the success that has attended my abrupt departure, you will grant me that pardon I should not otherwise dare to solicit.”

“ Indeed, Count Isenburgh (answered Estella) you do me injustice in supposing I have harboured the smallest repentment towards you.”

“ Then you deign to forgive me, (interrupted Isenburgh), even before

you know that success has crowned my endeavours in your behalf. How grateful I ought to be, and how careful in future, to restrain the natural impetuosity of my temper! but, before I begin an account of my adventures, allow me to ask, have you seen Sigismund lately? Much to my surprise and mortification, upon my arrival at home this morning, I found a letter from him to signify, that a summons from his father obliged his immediate return to Mansfeldt Castle! Can you tell me *when* he quitted Isenburgh?

At the mention of Sigismund's name, the deepest crimson flushed over the cheeks of Estella, and as suddenly gave way to the most ashy paleness, when she replied,

" I think it is four or five days since he called here to bid me farewell."

" The society of Sigismund is so inestimable to me (resumed Isenburgh), that I am always disconcerted at the privation; yet never, I think, did I feel his loss so severely, or so ardently desire his presence and advice as at this juncture.

" I consider you, Estella, as our joint ward, nor do I wish to act in any shape respecting you without his concurrence. I returned home this morning in the full conviction of finding him at the Castle; I will acknowledge, that I did not even think parental wishes would have influenced him to

quit this neighbourhood in my absence, my surprise and disappointment were therefore equally great."

" But, Count Isenburgh, (cried Estella) you do not consider that you are all this time exciting my curiosity, to know upon what subject that can regard me, you wished to consult your friend!"

" I wished to prepare you, Estella, (returned Isenburgh) for a piece of intelligence, that, no doubt, will agitate you. Have you sufficient resolution to hear intelligence of an old friend?"

" Oh! Count Isenburgh, (replied Estella, eagerly) for heaven's sake do not trifle with my feelings! you know

my little history; you know I have but one friend; say, then, 'quickly, have you, by good fortune, gained intelligence of Madame Veldentz?"

"Compose yourself, Estella, or I will be silent for ever, (answered Isenburgh)."

"Oh! I am calm enough to bear every thing (returned Estella); do not torture me with suspense; 'tis your silence, alone, that agitates me."

"Well, then, Estella, (replied Isenburgh) I have not only discovered the secret residence of Madame Veldentz, but I have seen and discoursed with her; it is only four days ago since I quitted her habitation!"

" Most generous of men, (cried Estella, falling at the feet of Isenburgh, in spite of his efforts to prevent her), words are inadequate to convey the feelings of my grateful heart! you elevate me above myself! what, shall I again see my dear governess; shall we never part again?"

" Oh! Count Isenburgh, may your unprecedented generosity receive the abundant recompense from heaven that it so richly deserves!"

" You estimate too highly, that which proceeds from the most common feelings, (returned Isenburgh, apparently confused at the warmth of Estella's gratitude), every one, in circumstances like myself, must surely have acted

similar ! But, Estella, I have a letter for you ; yet your agitation is so excessive that I own I tremble to deliver it."

" Give it me, pray give it me, (hastily replied Estella) ; I am not agitated, I am quite composed."

Ifsenburgh drew a letter from his pocket book, directed to Estella, and after announcing to her that the contents would not be thoroughly agreeable, and conjuring her to summons her resolution, delivered a letter into her hands, and she read as follows :

" TO ESTELLA.

" My dear child, hasten to me, let me embrace you and unfold the

mystery of your birth, whilst I am able! what have I not suffered since I was over persuaded to abandon you! but the generous friend who has exerted himself in your behalf, will convey you to me, (Oh! that I was able to hasten with him to you), you shall then hear every mysterious part of my conduct explained.

“ A. VELDENTZ.”

“ Oh! let me fly to her (exclaimed Estella, upon finishing the above), let me fly to her instantly. Count Isenburgh, deign to direct me, you have assuredly promised as much to my poor governess, who, from her billet, is ill, perhaps dying! And unless I fly to her instantly, death will deprive me of receiving her last sighs! But, by

what miracle did you discover her abode?"

"The most sedulous care would not, perhaps, have effected that discovery, had not chance aided my endeavours, (answered Isenburgh.) I travelled near a fortnight, making every possible enquiry, at every village and town that promised a glimmering of success: my efforts were fruitless, till one day, in passing the gates of an antique castle in a very remote situation, my horse starting at the sudden appearance of some poultry, threw me, and I remained, I know not how long, senseless. Upon recovering my senses, I found myself on a sofa, in a large and well-furnished room, and attended by two women, seemingly

domestics; and from them learned, that, alarmed at my situation when thrown from my horse, my attendants had rang at the bell, and requested assistance from the castle, which had been instantly given. Finding myself restored by the cordials they had administered, I prepared to depart, first begging to see the owner of the castle, that I might return the thanks I owed for my hospitable treatment. I was answered, that the lady of the castle was too ill to see any person; I therefore commissioned them to return my acknowledgments, begging at the same time to know the *name* of my benevolent entertainer; and judge my surprise, at hearing that of Madame Veldentz. The idea, that my hostess was probably the very Ma-

dame Veldentz that I was seeking, deprived me for some minutes of speech; but, recovering myself, I eagerly enquired of my informers, if Madame Veldentz was newly arrived at that spot? They were silent, and looked at each other. I repeated my enquiries; they were yet silent: then tearing a leaf from my pocket-book, I wrote, "If Madame Veldentz wishes to hear news of Estella, a person in the castle can give her interesting information." I entreated the senior of my attendants to convey it to her mistress; she obeyed, and in a few minutes returned with a message from Madame Veldentz, entreating to see me instantly. I flew to her apartment, and found her in bed, supported by pillows, pale and emaciated! I briefly recounted

to her my meeting with you, and its consequences: her agitation was really alarming, and, with many tears, she informed me, that she had been wretched since the day when she had been induced to quit you; that the bad state of her health had alone prevented her from herself seeking you; a violent fever having attacked her very shortly after her departure from the forest, but that she had sent many persons in fruitless enquiries after you; and finished her speech, by most earnestly adjuring me to bring you to her with all speed, lest she should be snatched from this world before she could make the confession that hung upon her lips, and which was so essential to your happiness to learn! To render you more anxious to comply with her

wishes, she wrote (though with great difficulty) the letter I have already delivered to you." " Oh, let me go to her this instant, (cried Estella,) I cannot rest till I have again beheld her !"

" Do not go till you have consulted Sigismund, (replied Isenburgh ;) might he not blame the precipitancy of your conduct?"

" This is unkind, Count Isenburgh, (returned Estella,) all sarcasm, at a time like this, should be withheld; even if Sigismund had a right to controul my actions, would he blame me for hastening to my first friend, in such circumstances?"

“ Oh, pardon me, Estella, (answered Isenburgh,) I meant not to distress you. I will, this instant, order my travelling carriage, with a female servant, to attend you, and we will quit Leipzig the moment you desire.”

“ This instant let me depart! (cried Estella,) I shall not enjoy a moment's ease till I commence the journey.”

Isenburgh withdrew for a few minutes, to give necessary instructions to his servants; but presently returning, announced to Estella, his wish to write to Sigismund before their departure, to inform him of the intelligence they had gained concerning Madame Veldentz. Estella assented to his ac-

quainting Sigismund with the tidings; but declared, that, upon no consideration could she permit him to put himself to the trouble of escorting her. "If you are so kind (added she) as to allow your carriage to convey me, it will be all that is necessary, and much more than I have any right to expect!"

"And can you really suppose me so negligent of you, Estella? (answered Isenburgh.) It is absolutely necessary that you have a proper guardian to conduct you so many leagues; and assuredly, as you are circumstanced, no one is *so* proper as myself. Do not, therefore, oppose me in this instance; however repugnant to my inclinations

to act contrary to your wishes, I must be peremptory!"

Estella knew not what to reply. Isenburgh's manner seemed resolute and determined: she had no longer courage to oppose him; and the extatic pleasure which fancy pictured of beholding Madame Veldentz, rendered her almost indifferent to the means that led to that desired end; she was, therefore, silent, whilst the eyes of Isenburgh glistened with transport at the acquiescence.

The Count then seating himself at a table, signified his design of writing to his friend, and looking at Estella, said,

"Do you not think it would be highly gratifying to Sigismund, if you would condescend to send him a few lines?"

"Would it be necessary? (replied Estella with some hesitation.) Would there not be an impropriety ——?"

"An impropriety! (resumed Isenburgh,) you are really fastidious, Estella! but, seriously, it will be a satisfaction to *me*, if you will address a short letter to him."

Estella endeavoured to write, but the idea that Isenburgh would probably view the letter, involved her in so much embarrassment, that she found herself unable to dictate a single line. She wished to write to Sigismund con-

fidentially, but to do so was impossible, whilst there was a probability that Isenburgh might behold her writing. Not knowing therefore how to act, she sat playing with the pen, and twisting the paper, till she perceived Isenburgh was folding up his own packet; and the sound of a carriage, driving into the court yard of the convent, which she believed to be that that was to convey her from its walls, gave fresh force to her ideas, and she hastily wrote :

“ *TO SIGISMUND.*

“ Count Isenburgh has, no doubt, explained the motives of my conduct, which, might otherwise, subject me to reprehension. As circumstances are,

you cannot blame me for accepting the services of that generous friend, and placing myself under his protection.

“ ADIEU.”

Estella had scarce finished her own little billet, when Isenburgh put the letter he had just written into her hand, and begged her to read over the contents: it consisted of an account similar to what he had already given of his journey, and unexpected meeting with Madame Veldentz, of the determination of Estella instantly to fly to her governess; and concluded with many regrets at Sigismund's unexpected absence.

The carriage being ready, Estella hastily took leave of the abbess, (to whom Isenburgh said, he had related that intelligence from a very dear friend, occasioned her abrupt departure;) and giving her hand to Isenburgh, was seated in the chaise, which drove with rapid velocity from the convent, and they were soon many miles distant from Leipzig.





CHAP. XI.

Estella ! what an angel hadst thou been,
If half thy outward graces had been plac'd
About the thoughts and counsels of thy heart !
But fare thee well, most soul, most fair ! farewell,
Thou pure impiety, and impious purity !
For thee I'll lock up all the gates of love,
And on my eyelids shall conjecture hang,
To turn all beauty into thoughts of harm,
And never shall it more be gracious.

SHAKESPEARE.



AFTER travelling, with undescribable celerity, on the evening of the fourth day from their quitting Leipzig.

Estella, with Isenburgh, arrived at a large antique mansion, insulated by an extensive park.

As she approached the spot where she expected to behold the friend of her juvenile years, the feelings of Estella became even painfully violent; and, when the carriage stopped at the entrance to the castle, her senses entirely forsook her, and she was lifted into a large, but Gothic hall, devoid of motion.

The domestic that had attended during their journey, assisted by Isenburgh, administered different aids to restore her to life, and in a short time their efforts succeeded; and the first words she uttered were, "Where is

Madame Veldentz? I conjure you, carry me to her instantly!"

"Pardon me, Estella, (cried Ifenburgh,) but the interview must not take place to night; you are fatigued and harassed by the length of your journey; and you already know Madame Veldentz is an invalid. To meet, therefore, now, might be highly prejudicial to both parties; and I entreat you, if not for your sake, if you value the repose and health of Madame Veldentz, to desist from your intention of seeing her at present."

In vain Estella represented, that to see *her* would renovate the en-

feeble spirits of her governess, and, at the same time, dissipate her own uneasiness.

Ifenburgh was firm and obstinate; and, after trying every argument to effect her wish, Estella was at last constrained to be satisfied with his promise, that he would himself conduct her to Madame Veldentz early on the following day.

Ifenburgh then insisted upon carrying Estella to the banquet hall, where a magnificent supper was prepared, but all his efforts to induce *her* to partake of it were fruitless; and, after swallowing some weak wine and water, she entreated the attendants of Ulrique,

(the person who had accompanied her from Leipzig,) and begged to retire to her apartment.

She was conducted to a large and superbly furnished room, in which, to her great satisfaction, she found a small pallet bed for Ulrique, placed adjacent to the magnificent one designed for herself; and, after commending herself to the protection of Providence, (notwithstanding the anxiety of her mind to behold Madame Veldentz,) fatigue so entirely overpowered her, that she soon sunk into sleep.

The following morning she did not awake, till Ulrique, in a soft tone, acquainted her, that Count Isenburgh

had sent a message, to request her company to breakfast.

Eager to see, in order to remind him of his assurance of conducting her to Madame Veldentz, Estella sprung from the bed, and assisted by her attendant, was soon dressed, when, precipitately quitting her apartment, she hurried to that in which she expected to find Isenburgh. Upon entering it, Isenburgh hastily arose, and conducting her to a seat adjoining to his own, at the breakfast table, addressed her in a strain of mingled gallantry and compliment, which both surprised and vexed her.

To check a mode of behaviour so distressing to her feelings, Estella re-

plied to him with the most frigid coolness; and, refusing the cup of chocolate he assiduously offered to her, desired to be that instant conducted to Madame Veldentz's chamber,

“ I have suffered myself foolishly to be detained from seeing her too long, (she continued,) but no power shall prevent me from this instant flying to her!”

“ Madame Veldentz cannot see you to day, fair Estella,” (returned Isenburgh, with provoking nonchalance.)

Estella, casting a look replete with indignation upon him, rose from her seat, and hastened towards the door:

Ifenburgh sprung forwards, and rudely stopped her.

“ We part not thus, (he cried,) the time is now come when all subterfuge is unnecessary: we will now come to an explanation.”

“ An explanation! (retorted Estella,) What explanation can be necessary? Let go my arm, Count Ifenburgh; I will not be detained another instant!”

“ Nay, hear me.” (replied Ifenburgh, still holding her.)

“ I consider myself in Madame Veldentz’s house, (resumed Estella,

haughtily,) and look upon myself empowered to dismiss from it, those who demean themselves with violence and incivility towards me. Leave me, therefore, this moment, Count Isenburgh, nor presume again to appear in my presence!"

"Upon my word, my charming Estella, (answered Isenburgh, laughing,) I never could have believed so much *spirit* inhabited that seeming gentle bosom! You have certainly a mind to charm me by thus displaying a new character! and your success is already confirmed in my heart. Variety is my idol; an eternal sameness palls the imagination; but the woman who is one moment dissolving

in languishing softness, and the next sparkling with lively passion, blends two such delightful extremes, that her empire over the soul must be alike; boundless, and full of rapture!"

"I am willing to believe, Count Isenburgh, (replied Estella, intimidated by the vehemence of his manner,) that I have misconstrued your intentions; and that what startled me for a few moments, simply arose from the vivacity of your disposition. Allow me, therefore, to seek Madame Vel-dentz, and, be assured, I will never remember what has just passed, but as the effusions of ill-judged pleasantry."

"There spoke the *gentle* Estella! (exclaimed Isenburgh,) but, at any

rate, it is my interest and desire to receive pardon. Seriously, dearest Estella, I have been to blame in hurrying on my explanation too rapidly! but let the discovery be ever so important, when it rests with me to unfold, the tale must be delivered in a plain, and, perhaps, abrupt manner; for long prefaces, and tedious digressions, are my soul's abhorrence."

"To the point then! It is impossible that you can have known me the length of time you have done, without perceiving the violent impression you have made upon my heart! Yes; I will repeat that which you already know so well: I love you with an unconquerable affection!"

Estella shuddered as Isenburgh pronounced these words; but, without seeming to observe her emotions, he continued:

“ Distracted with jealousy to perceive the preference your heart gave Sigismund, and aware of the return your love received from him, I determined, at all hazards, to separate you; for which purpose, I absented myself from my castle to give colour to my intended scheme; gave the requisite orders for this mansion being prepared to receive you; fabricated the ridiculous story of my finding your ancient governess, (whose hand writing I found means to imitate, by secreting the letter you shewed when related your

story,) and when the whole plot was laid, and the denouement alone wanting, transported myself to St. Agnes, and secured my prize! And now, Estella, when I remind you, that you are solely in my power, that Sigismund believes that you voluntarily accepted my protection, it is surely superfluous to add, that regret and anger cannot possibly be of any service, but that both prudence and interest should instruct you to bestow that love I solicit. Over my heart and fortune you reign absolute sovereign! Speak but what you would desire your settlement to be, and I will even double your expectations! Myself and fortune are solely at your command; and the most assiduous love, will, I hope,

in time, entitle me to a pre-eminent share in your affections."

Isenburgh would have proceeded, but the unhappy and deceived Estella, wrought up to a pitch of undescribable misery at the developement of the artifice that had entangled her in the net of her persecutor, sunk motionless upon the sofa. Alarmed at her situation, Isenburgh furiously rang the bell, and summoning Ulrique, and the principal part of his female domestics, ordered them to convey the fainting Estella to her apartment, and to use every method to promote her recovery.

Placed upon her bed, and afforded every relief that could be offered,

Estella speedily recovered that sensibility, of which horror and grief had deprived her.

Keenly alive to the frightful aspect of her destiny, her tears and lamentations, upon recovering her senses, were unceasing, and penetrated the hearts of her attendants with sympathy.

At the end of two hours, a message was delivered from Isenburgh, requesting to see her. Estella, who had for a few moments appeared more composed, upon hearing his intention of intruding upon her, burst into an increased agony of tears, and conjured her attendants, in the most

pathetic manner, at any rate, to delay the intended visit.

Softened by her grief, the women informed Isenburgh, that she was really too ill to see him; and Isenburgh, half-distracted at the intelligence, reiterated his commands of unremitting attention, intermingling his orders with wild threats and extravagant promises.

For four days Isenburgh was dissuaded from seeing Estella; but, on the fifth, his impatience over-leaping every other consideration, he sent her a peremptory message, signifying, that, unless she would deign to meet him in the breakfast parlour, he would, in-

stantly, forcibly obtain an audience in her dressing-room.

Terrified and alarmed, Estella repaired to the breakfast parlour, where she found Isenburgh traversing the apartment in apparent agitation.

“ Oh, Count Isenburgh! (she exclaimed,) for pity’s sake be merciful towards me! Send me back to St. Agnes, I conjure you! The affection with which you condescend to honour me I never can return; then cease to persecute an unhappy creature, but restore her to the asylum where her person was sheltered, and her woes alleviated.” “ This is not a season for nonfensical intreaty; (answered Isenburgh.) Is it natural that, after

the hazards I have run upon your account, I should yield my prize before I have been allowed time sufficient to gain your affections? But this is not the subject upon which I wish to discourse with you. I have this morning received letters from Sigismund; he is dangerously ill; your elopement seems to have filled him with astonishment; but here is a letter addressed to yourself. The contents, upon my honour, are unknown to me: perhaps, in that, he explains his feelings!"

At these words, Isenburgh presented Estella with a letter, directed to her in the hand writing of Sigismund. Her agitation was for a few minutes too violent to permit her to

break the seal;— and her grief, upon perusing the following short lines, was too agonizing to admit description.

“ *TO ESTELLA.*

“ Upon first perusing the billet you had the effrontery to write, which confirmed the heart-rending reports already conveyed to me, in a transport of mental anguish, I resolved never again to see or remember you.

“ The first resolution I will religiously keep; the latter, I will, for this once, deviate from. To tell you, Estella, I renounce you eternally, that no penitence can obtain your pardon,

but your infamous seducer shall yet find, I have an avenging arm to redress those wrongs with which he has eternally branded me.

“ SIGISMUND MANSFELDT.”

Oh, merciful Providence! (exclaimed Estella, wildly rising from her seat,) can nature bear this stroke! Is it not sufficient to be betrayed in the arts of falshood and treachery; must I, in addition, be cruelly upbraided? Let me go! Let me fly this instant! I will see Sigismund! I will convince him of my innocence! Then confine me; kill me if you please! I will not repine, or even murmur!”

“ This is the wild rhapsody of unmeaning passion! (cried Isenburgh,

forcibly leading her back to her seat.) Of what consequence to you is the opinion of Sigismund? You are not accountable to him for your actions; then why regard his puerile reproaches?

“ That Sigismund loved you, I am not to learn: and, though I yet consider him as an insignificant rival, I glory in having torn you from him, and having secured you even from his knowledge.”

“ Ah, there you deceive yourself, Count Henburgh; (returned Estella,) Sigismund knows where I am; or, could he have sent me that distressing letter?”

“ Indeed, Estella, he does *not* ! (replied Isenburgh, with apparent exultation,) Sigismund has yet to learn the place of our concealment.”

“ Previous to quitting Leipzig, I dispatched to Mansfeldt a confidential servant, with the letter you addressed to Sigismund, from St. Agnes ; at the same time commissioning the man to announce, that you had accepted my offers, placed yourself under my protection, and set off with me for Ariesheim ; (which is above two hundred and fifty leagues from the spot where we are at present :) judge, then, how little Sigismund knows of your real situation ; and, believe me, that, even if he were sufficiently ro-

mantic to pursue us, months must elapse before he could accomplish his aim."

"And what opinion do you expect me to entertain of you, Count Isenburgh, when you daily unfold a fresh scene of wickedness and dissimulation? (enquired Estella, with all the firmness she could assume.) Even had you been esteemed by me, the developement of so much treachery and artifice, would render you for ever despicable and odious to me!"

"Women always pardon what their beauty occasions." (Replied Isenburgh carelessly.)

"False, false assertion! (answered Estella, emphatically;) but, in the

commencement of your discourse, you affirmed Sigismund to be ill: pray heaven that is not the case?"

"I repeat, he is dangerously ill, (cried Isenburgh.) My servant informed me the whole castle was in confusion upon his account; the mother in tears, the father sending expresses to all the doctors in the district. If you continue incredulous, I will call up Holstein, and you shall yourself interrogate him."

"Oh, no, no! (cried Estella, in undefinable agony,) the measure of my woes are now filled!"

Suffocated by her tears, further utterance was denied Estella; and Isen-

burgh, partly melted by her grief, reluctantly permitted her to retire to her own apartment.





CHAP. XII.

No time shall raze thee from my memory;
 No, I will live to be thy monument:
 Ah, in my heart thou art interr'd; there, there,
 Thy dear resemblance is for ever fix'd!
 My love, my lord, my husband still, tho' lost!

CONCREVE.

THE grief and 'agitation' experienced by Estella, at the heart-rending reflection, that Sigismund believed her unfaithful to the vows she

had plighted, added to the frightful idea that she was friendless, and in the power of Isenburgh, was nearly too much for her already exhausted frame to support.

Upon repairing to her apartment, (though surrounded by the women placed to attend her by the order of Isenburgh,) her sorrow and lamentation knew no bounds.

Throwing herself upon a couch, and covering her face with a handkerchief, she seemed insensible of the presence of her attendants, and alive only to the violence of her affliction.

To lose the love of Sigismund, was, to lose the only blessing that

attached her to life! Sigismund, dearer to her than existence, and whose very anger served but to heighten her affection, since it demonstrated the sincerity of his attachment!

Yet this beloved object, upon the bed of sickness, believed her faithless and criminal, and her cruel destiny seemed to forbid any method of exculpating herself, and flying from the hateful tyranny of Isenburgh.

The continuance of her extreme grief seemed to soften the bosom of Ulrique, (her principal waiting woman,) who endeavoured to meliorate her anguish; but Estelle's mind was too deeply wounded to listen to the

common condolences of pity, and, for some hours, her tears were unabating, and the name of Sigismund would involuntarily escape her lips, accompanied by the most pathetic lamentations, till a gleam of hope dawned over her mind, that, could she obtain the friendship of her attendant, she might, probably, through her means, effect her escape from the power of Ifenburgh.

Reanimated by this idea, Estella testified the most lively gratitude for the attentions of Ulrique, and signified a visible preference in her favor; but after some time, when she endeavoured to prevail upon her to favor her flight, (representing she was unjustly detained, and had been seduced to the castle,

by deceit and falsehood); she was grieved and disappointed to find Ulrique listened coldly to her pleadings, and finally to protest her duty to Count Isenburgh would not permit her to act in opposition to his will.

Notwithstanding the distress their last interview had occasioned to Estella, Isenburgh, persisted in daily forcing himself into her presence; sometimes painting his passion in the most lively and softened colours, at others, endeavouring to intimidate her by threats.

At the expiration of a week, as Estella, bathed in tears, was contemplating the cruel letter she had received from Sigismund, and offering up prayers to heaven, to afford her an

opportunity of clearing herself to him, Ifenburgh abruptly entered the apartment, and, seating himself by her, cried,

“ I have just received unpleasant tidings; Estella, I shall expect you to join in my distress.”

Estella raised her eyes from the paper she was reading, and fixed them, for a few minutes, reproachfully upon Ifenburgh, then sighing, again turned them upon the dear, though cruel letter.

Ifenburgh continued. “ I thought, Estella, you would not have been thus indifferent to what related to poor Sigismund!”

"Sigismund!" (eagerly exclaimed Estella), have you heard from Sigismund?"

Isenburgh viewed her for some minutes in silence; the malignancy that beamed from his eyes, terrified and confounded her; for some time they both remained silent; at length Isenburgh said:

"I fear to alarm you, the lively interest you so candidly profess for my poor friend, renders me apprehensive that the sad event I have to unfold may overpower your tender feelings."

"Oh! merciful powers, (cried Estella), what have you to announce?"

"I am really very much concerned, (replied Isenburgh), and your agitation adds to my trouble. Poor Sigismund"—

"Is dead! (shrieked Estella, in almost breathless agony); your words, your looks, every thing confirms it!"

"'Tis too true, (answered Isenburgh); I have lost the beloved companion of my childhood, the valued friend of my riper years."

The grief and distress of Estella at this afflicting intelligence, nearly amounted to distraction. The presence of Isenburgh was no constraint, he added to the agony of her feelings

and uttered every thing despair could dictate.

Far from softened by her distress; Isenburgh observed her with gloomy anger, and it was not till her pallid cheek, and half closed eyes, seemed to declare she was near fainting, that he summoned the assistance of her women, and to their charge consigned her, with the strictest injunctions that she should receive every care and attention.

During several days that a violent fever seemed to threaten, ultimately, the life of Effie, Isenburgh appeared in a state nearly bordering upon phrenzy; constantly in an anti-chamber adjoining her apartment, he almost

momentarily made enquiries concerning her, and every instant uttered fresh directions for procuring an increase of medical advice.

On the fifth day of her illness, the principal physician, who attended, delivered it as his opinion, that her complaint approached the crisis, and that her strength would fail, at the important moment.

Distracted at the information, Ifenburgh wildly exclaimed,

"Save her life, and command my fortune! 'Tis I, alone, that am her murderer! Oh, merciful Providence, this is too much to be endured!" And,

in spite of every effort to detain him, he rushed into the apartment of Estella.

A profound silence reigned; he approached the bed; Estella lay entranced in a deep sleep; the carnation of her cheeks was fled; a lily paleness spread over her countenance, yet was her beauty as eminently conspicuous as at the first moment he had beheld her!

Sorrow and compunction overwhelmed him, and, kneeling by her bed side, he solemnly vowed, if her life was spared, to expiate the wrongs he had designed, by an honourable marriage.

When forced from the sick chamber, the distress of Isenburgh seemed to derive increasing strength: he, at some moments, soothed the physicians, and promised, that could they restore Estella, their rewards should be boundless; at others, threatened them with the most rigorous punishment in case of her dissolution.

The natural good constitution Estella possessed, once more befriended her; and, contrary to the expectation of her attendants, her illness took a sudden and favourable turn

The joy of Isenburgh upon her convalescence, was as frantic, as his despair during her danger had been vehement; and her medical attend-

ants, as well as nurfes, were laden with acknowledgments, both pecuniary and personal.





CHAP. XIII.

————— What envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder East :
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountains' tops.
I must be gone——



THOUGH health was restored to Estella, she continued a prey to the most tormenting disquietude ; grief, for the loss of Sigismund, preyed upon her

mind, and the honourable intentions that Isenburgh avowed, filled her with chagrin and terror.

Had she never known Sigismund, her sentiments and disposition were so opposite to those of Isenburgh, that it would have been impossible for her voluntarily to have consented to a union, notwithstanding his rank and fortune.

What then were her sensations, whilst idolizing the memory of her husband, and resolutely determining never to enter into a second engagement; upon reflecting that she was in the power of a violent and overbearing man, the slave of his passions, who imagined, that, in offering mar-

riage, he extenuated every previous cause of offence; and whose proposals, though she resolved never to accept, she yet trembled at the consequences of refusing.

To fly from the castle, and place herself under the protection of the Baroneſs Mansfeldt, was the ſummit of her deſires. Sigismund had always painted his mother in ſuch amiable colours, that, though unknown, ſhe experienced for her an undeſcribable love and veneration: yet the remembrance of the ſolemn promiſe with which ſhe had bound herſelf to Sigismund, never to diſcloſe their union, precluded every idea of claiming her protection, any otherwiſe, than as a friendleſs and unprotected female; but

the character she had heard of the Baroness for benevolence and goodness, induced her to hope she should not solicit in vain.

The idea was, doubtless, romantic; but Estella was very young, inexperienced and friendless; and, at the smallest shadow of hope, she eagerly grasped.

But to effect an escape from the power of Isenburgh, seemed almost impracticable. She was constantly watched throughout the day-time, and at night, Ulrique slept in her chamber, yet difficulty could not banish the idea from her mind; and whilst, to lull the suspicions of Isenburgh and his domestics, she appeared more calm

and resigned than since her residence at the castle, she was revolving fresh schemes to escape from it for ever.

Ifenburgh, in the mean while, endeavoured to dissipate the visible melancholy of Estella, by unremitting attention, and to engage her affection by the most artful and insinuating conduct; but though apprehensive of irritating him, she attempted to conceal the aversion he had inspired; in spite of her efforts, her dislike was so apparent, it was frequently difficult to him to refrain from giving vent to his anger, and reproaching her with the coldness with which she listened to his protestations of affection.

Estella had sufficiently recovered from her illness to walk in the air. Attended by Ulrique, and another female servant, she had taken a long walk in the extensive gardens belonging to the castle, (the lofty walls and iron gates of which seemed to extinguish every hope she had cherished of escaping,) when Isenburgh suddenly appeared before her.

Exercise had restored the roses to her cheeks that illness had dissipated, and never had she appeared so lovely in the eyes of Isenburgh, as at that instant. He ordered the women to retire, and then softening his manner, addressed Estella, informing her, with many expressions of tenderness, that

the priest was arrived, and that he flattered himself, as her health was so visibly restored, she would consent to their union taking place that evening, or the following morning.

Estella turned pale. "It cannot be this evening; (she faltering said,) it is impossible!"

"Tomorrow, then, dearest Estella, (returned Isenburgh,) and we will then quit this spot, and visit some of my distant estates. Travelling will be serviceable to your health."

Estella derived courage from the mildness she perceived in Isenburgh's manner.

“ Count Isenburgh, (he exclaimed,) I cannot permit you to nourish the idea, that I can ever unite my destiny to yours! By desiring it, you do me infinite honour, and I am grateful for your intentions; but obstacles, that never can be removed, oppose such a marriage; and, be assured, you have now heard my final resolution!”

Isenburgh could not conceal his displeasure at this declaration: he demanded to know the *reasons* that actuated her refusal; and made use of every possible argument to induce her to comply with his proposals, or to disclose the cause of their rejection. Estella was immovable; and the anger

and disappointment of Ifenburgh increased.

“ Tomorrow, (he added, vehemently,) the chapel will be prepared for our nuptials, and the priest in readiness to hear our vows; dispose yourself, therefore, Estella, to meet me at the altar, and become my wife by inclination. The offer never shall be again repeated: if, therefore, it is not willingly accepted, compulsion shall make you my mistress. You now know the alternative; decide as you think proper, but I will no longer be trifled with!”

With these words, Ifenburgh quitted Estella; and, terrified and con-

founded, she was reconducted to her apartment.

The remaining part of the day was passed by Estella in endeavouring to escape from the detested power of Isenburgh, previous to the time he had appointed for their nuptials.

She traversed the long suite of rooms appropriated for her use, and again examined, if the thick bars of iron which Isenburgh had taken the precaution to fix on the outside of the windows, could be removed by an effort of violence. They resisted all her attempts; and, fearful she might be observed making the endeavour, she returned to the room in

which she had left Ulrique and Gertrude.

Upon entering the apartment, she found them unpacking some large trunks, and taking from them some rich, and elegantly fancied dresses.

“ Observe, my dear lady, (cried Ulrique,) what beautiful cloaths Count Isenburgh has ordered for you! They are but this instant arrived; he wished to surprise you!”

“ They are very handsome, (returned Estella, coldly,) but they are not for me.”

“ Oh, yes, indeed, my lady, but they are all for you; (answered Ul-

rique,) which will you please to select for tomorrow? This, white and silver, would, I think, become you, and be very suitable."

Estella shook her head, and was silent; in the mean time, her attendants, delighted at viewing the splendid attire, continued taking the different dresses from the chests, and spreading them upon the chairs and sofas.

"Well, now, (continued Ulrique,) this is surprising! If here is not an entire mourning robe! Who could have supposed that any one could be so ridiculous to mingle *black* with bridal finery!"

Estella, from the time she had heard the afflicting intelligence of Sigismund's death, had ardently desired to shew her respect for his memory by wearing mourning; but, circumstanced as she then was, to obtain a black dress, was impossible, and she had had no other means of evincing her inclination, than by refraining from wearing *colours*, and girding a black ribbon round her waist; the sight, therefore, of the black robe, renewed all her wishes, and even determined her to overcome her scruples of accepting a present from Isenburgh; and, much to the astonishment of Ulrique and Gertrude, she desired them to prepare that robe for her wearing the following morning.

Night came, but brought with it no hopes of flying from Isenburgh. Estella went mournfully to bed; sleep was a stranger to her eye-lids; her anxiety increased with every succeeding hour which the great clock belonging to the castle announced.

At length morning dawned, and the clock tolled five! Estella started from her bed: one great effort was necessary; if she failed, could she be more wretched than at that period? If she should succeed!—

The probability of success reanimated her courage: she softly opened the curtains of the bed in which Ulrique slept, and perceived her in a

profound sleep. Cautiously closing them, she commenced dressing herself with trepidation. The box, containing the mourning robe was in the chamber. Estella could not resist the temptation, but, opening the lid, took out the dress, and hastily wrapped herself in its drapery.

A large pelise belonging to Ulrique being near the bottom of her bed, with a projecting bonnet, made in the manner of the country people, struck Estella's eyes, and the idea flashed across her imagination, that enveloped in them, (as her figure bore some resemblance to that of her attendant,) she might escape detection, should she chance to meet any of the servants of the castle.

Taking, therefore, her purse, and dividing the little sum it contained, she put one half with the part of her wardrobe, too heavy to be removed by her own hands, and, with a pencil, directed them for Ulrique, as a compensation for taking her bonnet and pelise; then hastily folding herself in the latter, and pulling the bonnet completely over her face, she took the small bundle of her cloaths that remained in her hand, and, with undescrivable anxiety, made an effort to open the door of her chamber.

A weighty bar of iron was placed across the door, in addition to a strong double lock that fastened it. Estella cautiously removed the bar; though heavy, it produced no sound;

but, when with trembling fingers she turned the key, which secured the lock, it seemed to snap with such violence, that her heart sunk within her, and she remained a few minutes, motionless, with fear and terror.

Every thing, however, remained quiet in the apartment, and Estella, recovering her spirits, softly closed the door, and descended the great staircase. Though she walked with the lightness of a sylph, yet her soft steps re-echoed upon the large Gothic stairs upon which she trod: her fears increased every instant; every sound seemed to indicate pursuit; and, when arrived at the entrance of the hall, she was forced, for a few minutes, to grasp a pillar for support!

Distant voices convinced her the inferior servants had risen, and, upon gaining the outward hall, her joy was extreme, at perceiving the grand entrance door open !

She descended the stone steps that conducted into the park ; and, with the utmost speed, walked down the avenue of oaks which opened into the high road.

At the extremity of the walk was placed a lodge, kept by a woman, formerly a servant in the family, and, who now received a small pension from Isenburgh for the trouble of attending the gate.

Estella's apprehensions encreased as she approached that spot, but trusting

to Ulrique's habit, and pulling her bonnet yet more over her face, she walked on with tolerable composure.

Two little children were playing near the gate. Upon seeing her advance, they ran into the lodge to fetch the key from their mother, and speedily returning, and unlocking the door, curtsied to Estella as she passed; the eldest saying,

“ Good morning, Mistress Ulrique; I suppose you are going to the fair?”

“ Yes, (answered Estella, scarce knowing what she uttered; and, at the same time, throwing some small

money to the little enquirer and his brother.")

The children gratefully returned their innocent thanks; and Estella, quickening her pace, hurried down the road, every moment dreading and expecting pursuit.

In less than a quarter of an hour, her apprehensions increased, with hearing voices, and the sound of wheels approaching! Her heart beat thick, and respiration nearly failed her, when the cause of her alarm appeared in sight, and proved to be a small cart, full of men, women and children, in their holiday cloaths, singing, laughing, and talking. Her fears gave way upon

perceiving them, and the driver of the cart addressed her as he approached, with,

“ If you are going to the fair, young woman, I have just one seat to spare, and will carry you for a trifle?”

Estella joyfully accepted this proposal; and though she knew not to what fair they were going, or where she should be carried, willingly ascended the vehicle.

The mirth and good humour which seemed to reign in the little circle, though she did not partake of, yet diffused a transitory pleasure over the mind of Estella, who gathered from

their conversation, that the fair to which they were destined, was held at Mindleheim, and about two leagues from thence.

Her companions, too much occupied with the idea of the pleasure they should enjoy, to observe the confusion and embarrassment of Estella, suffered her to remain silent and unnoticed; and after travelling about an hour and a half, which, to the agitated of Estella, seemed an age, the vehicle stopped at a small inn in the suburbs of the town of Mindleheim.

Estella, not knowing what step next to take, and whose mind was bewildered with anxiety, mechanically descended from the conveyance, and,

after satisfying the driver for his trouble, remained alone in the court-yard of the inn, her travelling companions having, with one accord, hastily repaired to the spot on which was held the fair.

The rattling of a carriage aroused her in some measure from her reverie; she retreated a few paces, and a coach, of general conveyance, drove up to the door, to take up passengers.

An elderly woman, of prepossessing appearance, descended from the steps of the inn door, and approached the coach, when, seeing Estella, and concluding from her dress, and the bundle she held in her hand, that she

was a fellow-traveller, addressed her with much civility. The coachman joining in the mistake, intreated Estella to follow the lady; and Estella, in whose mind the idea of flying from Isenburgh was alone predominant, waited not for a second invitation: and, without knowing to what spot the coach was destined, or considering any thing but that she might probably baffle the pursuit she judged would be made after her, placed herself in the coach, which immediately set forwards, with a velocity nearly equal to her wishes; and she was, in a few hours, many leagues distant from Mindleheim.



CHAP. XIV.

A solitary blessing few can find:
Our joys, with those we love, are interwin'd:
And he, whose helpful tenderness removes
Th' obstructing thorn which wounds the breast he loves,
Smooths not another's rugged path alone,
But scatters roses to adorn his own.

MISS MANNAH MORE.



THE coach in which Estella travelled, happened to take up no other passenger; she was therefore alone, with the woman who had, in some



CHAP. XV.

Then, while her lovely eyes with sorrows flow,
She half reveals the story of her woe:
The gentle dame her tale with pity hears,
Sighs back her grief, and answers tears with tears.

MOORE'S TASSO.



THE second evening after their departure from Mindleheim, Estella, with Mrs. Steinfort, arrived at *Pilsen*. Mrs. Steinfort desired to be conveyed directly to the castle of Stralzi, adding,

that her presence must be much required there, as the Marquis and Marchioness Rosenhaim were either arrived, or hourly expected, and consequently the castle would be full of guests.

Estella's heart sunk within her as they approached the splendid mansion of Stralzi; and looking at Mrs. Steinfort with eyes swimming in tears, said:

" I ought to thank you for your many attentions, Madam, before we separate. Alas! what will now become of me!"

Tears impeded further utterance. Mrs. Steinfort regarded her a few minutes in silence; then, taking her hand,

said; " I cannot endure the thoughts of leaving so young a woman unprotected. Will you place yourself under my care for this night? I can insure you, for that period, an asylum in the castle: in the morning, I will mention your history to the Baroness; and, if you have related the truth, I think, I may venture to promise you her protection."

The joy and gratitude of Estella at the kind offer of Mrs. Steinfort, was perfectly without bounds; and she entered the castle of Stralzi in a state of happiness she had not experienced for many months.

The following morning, agreeably to her promise, Mrs. Steinfort acquaint-

ed the Baroness with the singular chance of her meeting with Estella; of the favourable opinion she had inspired her with; and of the liberty she had taken, in bringing her for one night to the castle.

After hearing Mrs. Steinfort's recital, which the good woman rendered very minute, by enlarging upon the most trifling circumstances, the Baroness declaring she felt an uncommon prepossession in her favour, desired Mrs. Steinfort to conduct her to her apartment, a command Mrs. Steinfort obeyed with alacrity.

Estella, though delighted at the summons, yet felt much embarrassed

at the idea of presenting herself to the Baronefs, but resolved; if interrogated, to relate every occurrence of her life, the event of her marriage alone excepted; and that important circumstance, ſhe held herſelf not at liberty to divulge, in conſequence of the ſacred promiſe ſhe had given to Sigifmund to conceal it.

Notwithſtanding the encouraging aſſurances of Mrs. Steinfort, that Baronefs Stralzi felt much diſpoſed in her favour, Eſtella's agitation was ſo exceſſive upon entering the apartment of the Baronefs, that her trembling limbs almoſt refuſed to ſupport her. Mrs. Steinfort, as ſoon as ſhe had preſented her to the Lady, withdrew; and Eſ-

tella, sinking at the feet of the Baronefs, pathetically entreated^{*} her pity and protection.

The Baronefs, though prepared by Mrs. Steinfort for the appearance of youth and extreme beauty, was yet dazzled by the bewitching loveliness of Estella, whom, raising from the ground, and placing on the sofa by her side, she encouraged by the most affable behaviour, and promised, if she needed any office of friendship, to befriended her to the extent of her power.

The interesting and innocent manner in which Estella uttered the gratitude of her heart, encreased the prepossession and admiration of the Baroness.

Estella was endowed by nature with the most engaging address, and captivating manner; and, as these qualities were the gifts of nature, unassisted by art, so they seldom failed of interesting those she addressed in her favour.

The Baroness, after some conversation, in which the suavity of her behaviour in some measure diminished the diffidence of her juvenile companion, expressed a wish to know by what singular circumstance so young a creature should be thrown destitute and friendless on the world?

“ For (added she) Mrs. Steinfort informs me, you have told her, that you have not a single friend in existence?”

Estella, with tears, repeated the melancholy assurance; and, agreeable to the resolution she had formed, signified to the Baronefs, that, if it would not be intruding too much upon her time, she would relate the incidents of her life.

The Baronefs testified an eager desire to hear her narrative; and, after a short time, Estella faithfully related every circumstance of her early life; the singular manner in which Madame Veldentz kept her secluded in the forest near Colditz, and of the unaccountable departure of her governess; not concealing the letter which informed her, that the Abbess of St. Clare was prepared to receive her: her flight from their cottage to escape

the Abbess, with the chimerical hope of overtaking Madame Veldentz."

When Estella approached that part of her history that related to her first seeing Sigismund, grief at his remembrance, and confusion at the idea that she must suppress the circumstances of her life that related to him, almost overpowered her, and articulation was, for a few moments, suspended.

The Baroness, who solely imputed her disorder to confusion at the recollection of her disobedience to the injunctions of her governess, endeavoured to comfort her; and Estella, with some difficulty, proceeded to relate her meeting with Count Isenburgh in the forest; of his conveying her to his castle near

Colditz, and her illness and confinement there; of her application to the Abbess of St. Clare, and distress at being refused admittance to the convent: and her then gaining an asylum in that of St. Agnes.

She then proceeded to relate the artifice by which Isenburgh had ensnared her from the convent; and of his subsequent conduct whilst in his power, at his castle, near Mindleheim; and concluded, with an exact detail of her fortunate escape, and still more fortunate meeting with Mrs. Steinfort, which had been the means of introducing her to the Baroness Stralzi.

When Estella had concluded her story, the Baroness, affected by her

sufferings, and softened by her apparent candour, thanked her for the confidence she had reposed, and promised to render her every service in her power; at the same time she could not forbear from pointing out to Estella, that her distresses had arisen from her own imprudence; and that, from disobedience to the injunctions of Madame Veldentz, her subsequent misfortunes solely originated!

“ To be deprived in so sudden and extraordinary a manner of your protectress, (added the Baroness,) was a heavy affliction, and required the exertion of all your fortitude; but, from your knowledge of the character of your friend, you ought to have been convinced that her reasons for quitting

you were not to be controverted; and that, even could you have overtaken her in her flight, you would have only added to her distress: and, after all, the separation *must* have taken place.

“ If Madame Veldentz acted from good principles, she would have been *firm*; if, from bad ones, you would, depend upon it, have found her *implacable*! I do not mean to distress you; but are you aware of all the consequences attendant upon the rejection of the Abbess of St. Clare to receive you in the convent?”

“ My conduct admits of no extenuation.” (Returned Estella, weeping.)

“ Yes; your youth and inexperience are, in some measure, palliatives; and you have even suffered beyond your indiscretion, (replied the Baroness;) but, it appears from your story, that the idea has never occurred to you, that it is alone in the convent of St. Clare, that you can ever hope to hear intelligence of Madame Veldentz; for, as she supposes you in that retirement, if, at any future period she is induced to seek you, will not that naturally be the place of her enquiry?”

“ The reflection has too often wounded me, Madam, (answered Estella;) though I must own I am hopeless, as to her ever attempting to seek

me! But what can I do? The Abbeſs, prejudiced againſt me, has refuſed me admittance; and what ſhall I gain by freſh application, but a contumelious refuſal! Nevertheless, if it is your Ladyſhip's advice, I will make the attempt!"

"I would adviſe, that, at any rate you make enquiries reſpecting your friend, (replied the Baroneſs,) who, it is *poſſible*, though not very *probable*, may have written to you at the convent."

"I dare not hope for ſuch good fortune! (exclaimed Eſſella;) yet, depend upon it, my Lady, I will follow your advice."

“ Then write to the Abbess, in the course of a few days, (rejoined the Baroness;) inform her, that you are, at present, under my protection; and, so far from desiring your admittance into the convent, I do not intend to part with you; but request to hear any intelligence she may have to communicate respecting Madame Veldentz. I will also write to her, and inclose your letter in my packet.”

Estella expressed her gratitude and thanks for the kindness of the Baroness, in the most affecting manner; and felt so powerfully, the force of her goodness, that the most painful regret overwhelmed her at having been forced

to act with duplicity, towards, so apparently, an amiable woman; and while seemingly disclosing the whole of her history, concealing such a principal event as her marriage!

She felt most severely, that *one* deviation from truth, introduces a repetition of falsehoods; and deeply regretted, that, hurried on by passion, she had ever yielded consent to a clandestine union, which had necessitated her to promise such inviolable secrecy; the memory of Sigismund was dearer to her than ever; and she reproached herself with having been the cause of such an affectionate son's disobedience to his parents; and painted, in her imagination, the distress

and remorse he must have endured upon his death bed, whilst receiving the tenderest parental attentions, at the reflection, that he had committed an action he dared not to avow !

As these afflicting images passed over the mind of Estella, her countenance imbibed the melancholy cast of her ideas, and appeared so affectingly sorrowful, that the Baroness, who was attentively observing her, felt almost overpowered with pity and commiseration ; and, taking her hand as she sat by her side, assured her, in the kindest manner, of her future friendship ; and Estella, smiling through her tears, endeavoured to throw aside the gloomy, and entertain more cheerful ideas.

The entrance of Baron Stralzi interrupted their conversation ; and, after having been introduced to him by the Baronefs, as a young person of whom she had taken charge, Estella withdrew to her own apartment.





CHAP. XVI.

Then pilgrim turn, thy cares forego,
All earth born cares are wrong;
Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.

GOLDSMITH.



BARONESS Stralzi was naturally amiable and good-tempered; but romantic and credulous to an extreme. Married at a very early period to a

man considerably older than herself, who indulged her in every inclination and caprice, she gave way, without scruple, to the predominant turn of her mind; and to be *beautiful, interesting, and unfortunate*, was a sure criterion to obtain her aid, sympathy and friendship.

Notwithstanding the innumerable deceptions that were practised upon her, and the variety of disappointments she experienced, Baroness Stralzi persisted in cherishing the illusion, and allowing herself to be solely governed by the impulse of the moment, a failing that was particularly favourable to Estella, whose beautiful

figure, and romantic history, at once excited a considerable interest in her bosom.

The Baron, who saw with pain the serious vexations that the sudden and violent friendships of his lady frequently produced, listened but coldly to the encomiums bestowed by her on Estella, after she had withdrawn; and could scarce forbear from hinting his doubts, as to the truth of her story, which appeared to him strange and improbable.

Complaisance, however, to the Baroness, constrained him to silence upon that subject; and he contented

himself with observing, that he hoped her new friend would not disappoint her expectations.

The Baron, though thus mistrustful of the innocent Estella, wanted neither goodness of heart, nor liberality of sentiment; he was, on the contrary, one of the worthiest and best of men; and, to his urbanity and philanthropy, the Baroness was greatly indebted for the high character given of her by Mrs. Steinfort; for, as she never *opposed* any scheme of benevolence he might adopt, he, in return, generally bestowed upon her the merit of the action.

Very contrary to the wishes of Estella, Baroness Stralzi, to evince her regard, insisted upon her joining the family at dinner.

Upon entering the dining hall, she found, besides the Baron, (to whom she had been presented in the morning,) his youngest son, Lord Palamede, and the Marquis and Marchioness Rosenhaim.

Lord Palamede, in whose praise Mrs. Steinfort had been so lavish, fully equalled the description given him as to external appearance, and seemed sensible and agreeable in his manners.

The Marquis Rosenhaim had an austerity in his countenance, and hauteur in his conversation, that inspired Estella with a degree of awe that was even painful; but, whatever disagreeable sensations she might feel when addressed by him, the mild affability of the Marchioness more than recompensed.

This charming woman appeared to Estella, not to be more than four or five and thirty years old; but, from some conversation that took place betwixt her and the Baroness, she afterwards concluded to be some years older.

She was tall, graceful, and beau-

tifully formed; and so captivating in her manner, that Estella, from the moment she beheld her, felt eager to obtain her notice and regard.

In considering her countenance, it struck Estella as bearing a strong affinity to some one she had seen before; but to whom she could not recollect.

The Marchioness, though, in general, unlike the Baroness, in respect to sudden attachments, yet felt inconceivably charmed with Estella; and, though she had, upon first hearing the history, rather blamed the Baroness's credulity, in taking the young creature under her protection *before*

she had written to the Abbess of the convent of St. Clare, and made enquiries concerning her, after seeing and conversing with her, she found it impossible to condemn the predilection of the Baroness.

Notwithstanding the kind attentions of the Marchioness and Baroness, the politeness of Palamede, and the hospitality of the Baron, Estella felt constrained in a society so new to her, and eagerly embraced a hint given by the Baroness, that probably she had not recovered the fatigue of her journey, to retire ~~to~~ her own apartment.

She had no sooner retired, than

she became the general topic of conversation.

The Baroness was warm, even to enthusiasm in her praise! The Marchioness admired her artless manners, and the extreme modesty she possessed: the Baron exclaimed, " she was the prettiest girl he had ever seen;" and the Marquis said, " she would be a compleat beauty, had her figure but more dignity."

But the person who was most silent on the subject, felt, perhaps, a warmer interest, and more lively curiosity, concerning Estella, than any one in company.*

Palamede had not spoken a syllable

ble from the time she had quitted the room, yet his thoughts were so fixed upon her, that he had scarce heard a sentence of the conversation that had passed..

Estella had not been many minutes in her chamber, when some gentle taps at the door preluded the appearance of Mrs. Steinfort.

“ Well, my dear young Lady, (cried she upon entering the apartment,) I may now congratulate you upon having secured a safe and comfortable asylum! I assure you, I am rejoiced at your good fortune. And how do you like my Lady and the

Baron? Are they not a worthy couple?"

Estella uttered every grateful expression her heart could dictate, to Mrs. Steinfort, for her introduction; and bestowed the warmest encomiums upon the Baron and Baroness, particularly upon the latter; and then enquired, if the Marquis and Marchioness Rosenhaim were related to the family?

"Yes, (replied Mrs. Steinfort;) the Marchioness is my Lady's own sister. Is she not a charming woman, Miss Estella? To look at her, who would suppose she had grown up chil-

dren! Yet such is the fact. Her daughter was married a few months ago to Count Altenburgh; and her son is at present travelling, and *our* Lord Friburgh is his companion. We expect them back in about two months time; and, till then, the Marquis and Marchioness will remain here."

"The Marchioness is, indeed, a lovely woman, (returned Estella,) 'tis impossible to behold her without feeling both love and admiration!"

"And the Countess, her daughter, is just such another sweet creature! (rejoined Mrs. Steinfort.) Oh, 'tis a charming family, Miss Estella,

except the Marquis—but mum, for that! I do not love to rail, or else I could tell you a few anecdotes concerning him that would not encrease your good opinion!”

“ Why, it is an unpleasant task to dwell upon the failings of mankind!” (Answered Estella.)

“ It is indeed, Miss! (returned Mrs. Steinfort.) And therefore I do not love to speak concerning the Marquis.”

Then enquiring of Estella, if she had every thing she desired; or, if she should send a female servant to attend her; and being assured in

reply, that she wanted no assistance, Mrs. Steinfort retired with many expressions of kindness and good will.

Estella, when left alone, found it impossible to close her eyes. The strange manner in which she had escaped the power of Isenburgh, and the flattering hope that she had secured powerful friends and protectors, overpowered her mind with joy.

Then the vicissitudes she had experienced during the last six months of her life crowded upon her imagination; and lastly, the tender recollection of her beloved Sigismund, and the insupportable idea, that he died in the conviction of her false-

hood, tortured her with unspeakable anguish; and it was not till the approach of day-light that sleep settled upon her eye-lids, and lulled her to a temporary repose.



